Claims:

1. A thickener comprising a fatty acid alkanolamide represented by the general formula (1):

$$\begin{array}{c|cccc}
O & R^{2} \\
\parallel & | & \\
R^{1} - C - NH - C - CH_{2}O(AO)_{n}H
\end{array} (1)$$

wherein R^1 represents a straight-chain or branched alkyl or alkenyl group, having 5 to 21 carbon atoms, which may be substituted with at least one hydroxyl group, R^2 and R^3 independently represent an alkyl group having 1 to 2 carbon atoms, AO represents an oxyalkylene group having 2 to 4 carbon atoms and n denotes a number of 0 to 10 in average.

- 2. The thickener according to Claim 1, wherein \mbox{R}^2 and \mbox{R}^3 represent a methyl group.
- 3. A surfactant composition comprising the thickener as claimed in Claim 1 or 2 and at least one surfactant.
- 4. The surfactant composition according to Claim 3, wherein the surfactant is an anionic surfactant.
- 5. Use of a fatty acid alkanolamide as defined in Claim 1 or 2 to thicken a surfactant.
- 6. A method of thickening a surfactant, which comprises mixing a fatty acid alkanolamide as defined in Claim 1 or 2 with the surfactant.